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Undergraduate Completion and Persistence at Four-Year Colleges and Universities

Completers, Persisters, Stopouts, and Dropouts

Oscar F. Porter
National Institute of Independent Colleges
and Universities

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The National Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities
Suite 750
122 C Street, NW
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Oscar F. Porter
Assistant Executive Director
NIICU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

While the 1950s and 1960s were boom years for higher education, the past fifteen years have been a period of retrenchment. As the traditional college-age population of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds began to shrink in the late 1970s, many colleges and universities were forced to do a better job of recruiting and retaining students. The study of student persistence—the way students enroll, stay enrolled, complete their degrees, or drop out—is not new, but the era of scarcity has lent a new urgency to the search for factors that influence this behavior.

In 1987, the National Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities began a two-year study of the persistence behavior of undergraduates at America's four-year colleges and universities. The *High School and Beyond* study, a national survey of 28,000 1980 high school seniors developed by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics, was selected as the data base. A comparison of independent and public institutions was the principal interest in the analysis, but three other areas were examined as well: the persistence of minority students, the unique experience of high-ability/low-socioeconomic-status students, and the role of grants in first-year persistence.

The findings are descriptive in character, and do not indicate causal relationships. They do, however, provide a detailed discussion of the persistence of American college students during the 1980s, an era that may be a harbinger of the higher education environment of the next century.

Persistence

In this study, "persistence" describes the flow of students through college over a six-year period. Four categories of persistence were identified—completers (those who completed a bachelor's degree), persisters (those who were continuously enrolled), stopouts (those who left and returned), and dropouts (those who left and did not return).

The discussion addresses persistence in two different ways: as degree completion versus noncompletion, and as dropping out versus not dropping out. These approaches give somewhat different perspectives on the phenomenon and produce different results in some student subgroups.

Findings

1. Degree completion was lower than anticipated from a review of earlier literature.

Only 41 percent of all the students in the sample completed a bachelor's degree within six years of their high school graduation. If we consider only those students who went to college on the traditional path (full-time enrollment, directly after high school, at a four-year college or university), that completion rate increases to approximately 46 percent. If the broader definition of persistence (not dropping out) is applied, the persistence rate is 55 percent. This could mean that more than half the students might complete a degree if the time period of the study were extended.

2. Completion was more timely and at a higher rate in independent colleges and universities.

The overall completion rate for traditional-path independent sector students is 54.2 percent after six years, compared to 43.7 percent in the public sector. Four years after high school only 15 percent of all the students had completed a bachelor's degree, but more than a quarter of independent college and university students had finished. The difference between the two sectors is established after four years and maintained through the six-year period of the study.

Public institutions, however, had higher rates of students still working on their degrees (persisters and stopouts). The lower completion rates in the public sector after six years may be because these students took more time to complete their degrees.

3. Black and Hispanic completion rates lag seriously behind those of whites and Asian Americans.

The completion rates for black and Hispanic students are between 25 and 30 percent, compared to more than 50 percent for whites and Asian Americans. In general, the completion rates for all ethnic groups are higher in the independent sector. Hispanics are the exception, however: their completion rate at independent institutions is less than 2 percentage points higher than in the public sector—not a meaningful difference. The completion rate in both sectors is influenced heavily by white and Asian American students, but one must note that the advantage in completion rate enjoyed by the independent sector appears to be driven more strongly by the performance of white and Asian American students.

4. The greatest enrollment loss occurred during the first year and after the eighth semester.

Almost 20 percent of the students dropped out by the third semester. The rates for independent and public institutions are not appreciably different, but there are some differences by ethnic group. Asian Americans were more likely to remain enrolled (only about 10 percent left), and black students were more likely to leave, especially in the public sector—more

than a quarter of the black students had dropped out by the third semester.

The jump in the dropout rate after the eighth semester is almost equal to the rate after the first year. The dropout rate for Hispanic students, especially those in the independent sector, appears to increase substantially after four semesters.

5. Both socioeconomic status and academic ability influence persistence.

As status and ability rise, completion rates also increase. There is no difference in this pattern for the two institutional sectors in socioeconomic status, although the completion rate for high-ability students in the independent sector is higher than the public sector's rate by more than 8 percent. Looking at ability and persistence, there is a higher completion rate in the independent colleges and universities, and that difference increases as ability level rises.

The results for the various ethnic groups follow the general pattern with two major exceptions. There appears to be no relationship between socioeconomic status and completion for Hispanic students. Their completion rates do not vary substantially in either institutional sector or in any socioeconomic status group. The other exception is among black students, but the variation observed may be a function of the number of black students in the sample.

6. The cumulative effect of socioeconomic status and ability, as illustrated by the persistence of high-ability/low-socioeconomic-status (HA/LSES) students, is greater than the influence of either factor by itself.

HA/LSES students were substantially more likely to complete a degree than were all low-socioeconomic-status students, and minority HA/LSES students were considerably more likely to complete than minority students in general. White HA/LSES students, however, were much less likely to complete than white students in general.

Overall, the completion rate is slightly higher for HA/LSES students in the independent sector, but this is more pronounced among minority HA/LSES students. There is no sector difference for white students.

7. Students who received grants in their first year of study were more likely to remain enrolled than students without grants.

Nine of ten students who received a grant during the first year were still enrolled in the second semester. The rate for students without grants was approximately 75 percent. These data apply to students enrolled in both independent and public institutions, and there were no differences by ethnic group for grant recipients.

However, black students without grants had much higher dropout rates in both institutional sectors. Only two of three remained continuously enrolled in the independent sector; fewer than 60 percent persisted in public institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Since World War II, American higher education can be viewed in the context of two overarching themes—expansion and retrenchment. Between 1945 and the early 1970s, growth was the watchword. The G.I. Bill, a strong economy, increased federal support in response to the Sputnik scare, and the pressures of the civil rights movement combined to increase the number of college students and to make that new student body resemble the broader American population.

Then the pendulum made its inevitable sweep in the mid-1970s, and the watchword changed from growth to retrenchment. The traditional college student was said to be a dying species. Classrooms would be empty; dormitory rooms would go unused; colleges would close. All these predictions have come true in varying degrees over the past fifteen years. The available pool of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds is smaller; older students and part-time students make up an increasingly large part of college enrollments; and the enrollment growth of traditionally underrepresented minorities has slowed noticeably, especially among blacks.

In this contemporary environment of scarcity, research on college student persistence has taken on a new urgency. Whether students who enter college actually complete an undergraduate degree is not a new interest, but its practical implications for the survival of our colleges and universities has made it a top priority for decision makers.

For fifty years higher education researchers have been interested in undergraduate degree attainment and what has come to be called "persistence." During much of the first four decades of that work, the focus was on students who left college. The perspective of the early researchers is best illustrated by their choice of words to describe the phenomenon: mortality, survival, attrition—even autopsy.

In the last ten years persistence has become the commonly accepted term for the phenomenon, and its study has increased significantly. While the more positive connotation of persistence is appealing, the reason for the increased interest in who stays in college may well be explained by one of the older terms—survival.

As this decade began, education researchers Lenning, Sauer, and Beal reminded us that there really are only three ways to maintain enrollment in the face of a shrinking traditional student pool.[1] First, you can increase the proportion of the traditional pool that attends college. Second, you can pursue nontraditional populations. The third strategy is to increase retention. This last strategy appears to have met with the least amount of success over the last decade.

The situation is all the more frustrating because retention is the only strategy that is directly under the control of the institution. Persistence focuses on the students already enrolled. It requires neither redoubled efforts to increase the number of traditional students, nor the exploration of previously undeveloped applicant pools. It only requires a college to do a better job of managing its basic resource—the enrolled student.

Therefore, it appears that the most efficient approach to maintaining or expanding undergraduate enrollment lies in better retention of students once they are enrolled. This includes efforts to recruit and retain students from underrepresented minority groups.

There is, however, a problem inherent in this strategy. While much can be done to improve retention and degree completion rates, the groups in the American population that have the greatest potential for demographic growth (blacks, Hispanics, and native Americans) historically have been the least likely to persist and to complete a bachelor's degree. Therefore, relying on retention to maintain enrollment will require increased attention to these specific groups on campus. This attention must begin with an attempt to describe and understand the nature of persistence.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study by the National Institute of Independent Colleges and Universities (NIICU) was designed to describe the persistence behavior of undergraduate students, with an emphasis on similarities and differences between public and independent institutions. There is some evidence to suggest that students at independent colleges and universities are more likely to complete a bachelor's degree than their counterparts in the public sector [2]. However, very little work has been done using institutional control as a key variable.

Based on a review of the previous literature on persistence, students' socioeconomic status, academic ability, and ethnicity were considered in the analysis. Special attention was paid to minority students, students of high academic ability from low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds, and the role of financial aid in persistence through the first year of college.

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1. O.T. Lenning, L. Sauer, and P. Beal, "Student Retention Strategies," in *Higher Education Research Reports No. 8* (Washington, D.C.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, 1980).

2. Dennis Carroll, *College Persistence and Degree Attainment for 1980 High School Graduates: Hazards for Transfers, Stopouts, and Part-timers* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, 1989).

DATA BASE AND METHODS

The ability to generalize from many studies of persistence has been limited because the research focused on a single institution, a limited set of institutions, or employed an inadequate time frame. The last point is particularly important since persistence and degree completion take place over an extended period of time—traditionally four years, but now often longer. The ability to study the same student cohort over a sufficient period of time is essential but seldom possible. Finally, detailed information on college attendance patterns and financial aid is essential to the description of persistence.

NIICU chose the *High School and Beyond* data base, developed by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education, for this study. As a single source of information on college students in the 1980s, *High School and Beyond* is probably the most complete national data base available. It provides base-year information on approximately 28,000 students who were high school seniors in 1980, and includes data from follow-up surveys of nearly 12,000 students in 1982, 1984, and 1986. This study focuses on data supplied by students in the third (1986) follow-up. While data are available on the students' personal backgrounds, educational experiences, work histories, and family formation, we are interested only in the education experiences of students who attended a four-year college or university between 1980 and 1986. (See Appendix Tables 1A and 2A for a description of the sample and the college entry paths of the students.)

Persistence

Just what is meant by persistence? Is it degree completion or continuous enrollment? Is it measured by the year, by the semester, by the month?

Persistence is a complex behavior, perhaps best described as the flow of students into and out of college. In this study, persistence is defined by a four-category variable to capture its two dimensions: behavior (enrolled or not enrolled) and time (when enrolled and for how long).

- "Completers" are students who completed a bachelor's degree.
- "Persisters" are continuously enrolled students who have not completed a bachelor's degree.
- "Stopouts" are students who enrolled in a four-year institution, left for at least one semester, but were enrolled at the time of the third follow-up.
- Finally, "dropouts" are the students who enrolled, left, and had not returned by the time of the third follow-up.

The Independent Variables

The most important independent variable for the study is institutional control. The construction of the variable produces two categories. "Public" identifies students who spent their entire undergraduate careers in public institutions. "Independent" identifies students who spent their careers in independent colleges and universities. (Students who attended an institution in each sector make up only 12.7 percent of the weighted sample, which precludes useful analysis.)

The second essential independent variable is ethnicity. (See Appendix Tables 3A, 4A, and 5A.) The *High School and Beyond* data base provides a composite ethnicity variable that identifies five groups—blacks, Hispanics, native Americans, Asian Americans, and non-Hispanic whites.

The data base also contains students' socioeconomic status (a composite of father's education, mother's education, father's occupation, family income, and material possessions in the home), high school grades, and scores on an ability test administered to all students. Each of these variables was analyzed in relation to persistence.

The study also sought to discover what happens to students with high ability from low-income/socioeconomic-status backgrounds. Can ability overcome the financial and other difficulties that one would expect to affect persistence and degree completion? To answer these questions, a high-ability/low-socioeconomic-status (HA/LSES) variable was created. This variable was constructed from three existing variables—high school grades, academic ability test score, and socioeconomic status.

FINDINGS

Who Attends and Persists?

Nearly two of three 1980 high school seniors attempted some type of postsecondary education within six years of high school graduation. Among the students attending a four-year college or university, some 73 percent enrolled full-time in fall 1980; the remainder started at a less-than-four-year institution, entered part-time, or delayed entry for at least one semester. One in four enrolled in an independent institution.

After six years, 40 percent of the students had completed a bachelor's degree, while 44 percent had dropped out. (See Table 1.) If we look only at the students who began on the traditional entry path, the completion rate increases to 46 percent and the dropout rate falls to about 42 percent. These figures are lower than one would reasonably expect, and might cause some concern about the performance of today's college students.

Table 1 **Persistence after Six Years for All Students**

Persistence Category	Percentage
Completers	40.7%
Persisters	4.5%
Stopouts	10.4%
Dropouts	44.3%

However, if one uses a measure of persistence that includes all students who have not dropped out, rather than just those who completed, the picture is somewhat different. More than half the students on the traditional entry path (58 percent) had either completed a degree or were still pursuing it actively after six years. Fifty years of research on persistence has shown with remarkable consistency that approximately 50 percent of those who begin college eventually complete their degrees. Extending the time frame would undoubtedly increase the completion rates. Seen in this context, the persistence of these 1980 high school seniors may not be as disturbing as it first seemed.

There are marked differences in the persistence of the students in independent four-year colleges and universities and public institutions. (See Figure 1.) After six years, 54.2 percent of the independent sector students who started on the traditional path had completed a degree, but only 43.7 percent of the public sector students were finished. Students in the independent sector also had a lower dropout rate, but the difference (5 percent) is not as substantial as the difference in degree completion. The students in the public sector were more likely to take more time to complete their degrees than were independent college and university students.

If one looks at persistence on a semester-to-semester basis throughout the six-year period, one thing becomes apparent immediately: the four-year bachelor's degree is a thing of the past for the vast majority of students. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 1 **Persistence after Six Years for Traditional-Entry-Path Students by Institutional Control**

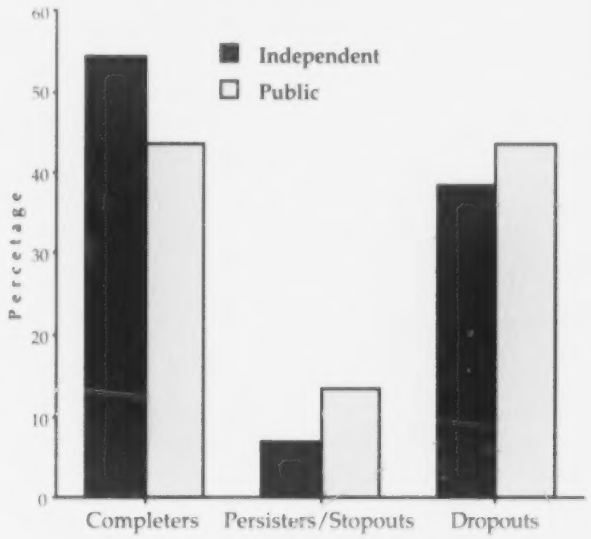
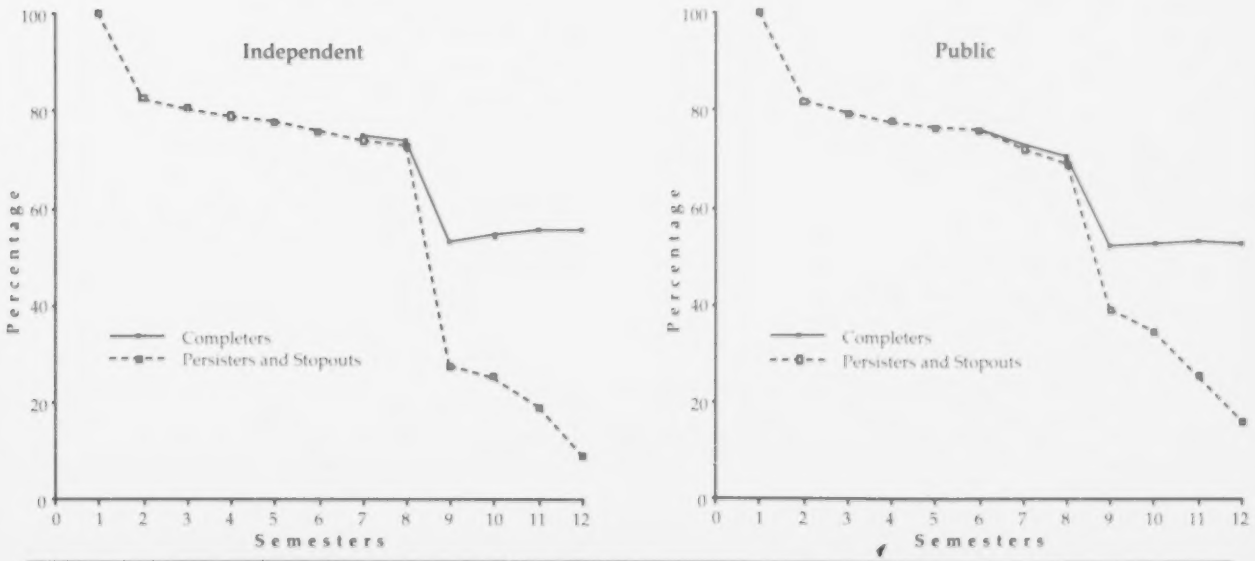


Figure 2 **Semester-by-Semester Persistence Rates by Institutional Control for All Students (1980-1986)**



Much has been made of the importance of the freshman year to persistence, and these data confirm that importance. The greatest single point of loss in persistence is the first year. Nearly one of five students is not enrolled by the second year of college, and 18 percent have left before the first year is over. Some students do return, and there is a clear flow back into the system that is particularly apparent in the first two years. However, the percentage of students in the dropout category also grows during this period, indicating that more students are leaving than are returning.

Between the eighth and ninth semesters, 15.5 percent of all students completed a bachelor's degree. The total completion rate after nine semesters is 17.2 percent. Thus the majority of bachelor's degrees were earned in five to six years after high school, not in four years.

The pattern of degree completion at independent and public institutions is quite similar through the first eight semesters. However, in the ninth semester the independent colleges and universities have a completion rate of 27.2 percent for traditional-path students, compared to 15.3 percent in the public sector—a difference of 11.9 percent. For the remainder of the six-year period of the study, the independent sector maintains a lead of roughly 11 percent.

As mentioned earlier, the public sector has a larger percentage of students still pursuing their degrees (persisters and stopouts) after six years. It is possible that they will complete and close the gap between independent and public institutions in the future. However, students in independent colleges and universities clearly completed their degrees in a more timely manner than their public sector peers.

The Influence of Socioeconomic Status

Earlier research indicates two factors that are most likely to influence persistence—socioeconomic status and academic ability. Remember that our sample is composed of college students, not a random sample of eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds. Two of three students in the group come from the top half of the socioeconomic-status range, and 71 percent of them scored in the top half on the academic ability test administered to all *High School and Beyond* students. (See Appendix Table 9A.)

Not surprisingly, completion rates rise as socioeconomic status rises for all students. (See Table 2.) Only 23 percent of the low-socioeconomic-status students completed their degrees, while more than 50 percent of the high-socioeconomic-status group finished. More than 64 percent of the low-socioeconomic-status students dropped out, while 34 percent of the high-socioeconomic-status group left. The same pattern is found among students who began on the traditional entry track, although the completion rates are a bit higher for all socioeconomic-status groups, and the dropout rates slightly lower.

When independent and public institutions are compared, there is an overall advantage in completion rate to the independent sector in three of the four socioeconomic-status quartiles. Only among students

Table 2 **Persistence by Socioeconomic Status and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students**

Persistence Status	Socioeconomic Status: Low Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	High Quartile
Completers				
Independent	27.2%	43.0%	53.5%	65.4%
Public	31.2%	30.8%	46.4%	50.8%
Persisters and Stopouts				
Independent	16.4%*	6.9%*	7.6%*	5.1%*
Public	5.7%	10.1%	4.2%	6.3%
Dropouts				
Independent	56.5%	50.2%	38.9%	29.5%
Public	58.5%	53.6%	40.7%	35.4%

Notes: "Unweighted N" indicates the actual number of students in the sample that fall into the category.
An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

in the low-socioeconomic-status quartile does the public sector show a very small advantage for all students. There is no apparent difference in dropout rates for the two sectors. The public sector does maintain a slightly lower dropout rate (about 3 percent lower) in all but the high-socioeconomic-status group. Among traditional-path students, however, independent colleges and universities enjoy a slightly lower dropout rate in all socioeconomic-status quartiles.

Overall, it is clear that socioeconomic status has a direct influence on persistence and completion. What is surprising, however, is that independent colleges and universities appear to have an edge in completion for all students except those in the lowest socioeconomic-status group (where the public sector has an edge of less then 3 percent). The independent sector does enroll a somewhat higher percentage of high-socioeconomic-status students (45 percent versus 36.5 percent), but there is no substantial difference in enrollment rates by sector in any other quartile. Therefore, the 11.5 percent higher degree completion rate for students in the independent sector cannot be explained by the hypothesis that independent colleges and universities enroll and graduate only wealthy students.

The Influence of Academic Ability

The findings on academic ability are quite similar to those for socioeconomic status. (See Table 3.) As ability scores rise, completion rates rise for all students and for traditional-path students; as ability scores decrease, dropout rates rise. In fact, the relationship appears to be somewhat stronger for ability than for socioeconomic status; more than 70 percent of the low-ability students dropped out, and only 14 percent completed.

In three of the four ability quartiles, students at independent colleges and universities were more likely to complete their degrees, particularly traditional-entry-path students in the top half of the ability range. Among the students of lowest ability, there is no difference in completion rate by sector. Students in the bottom half of the ability range were more likely to drop out of the independent sector, but the dropout rate for students in the top half of the range is slightly higher in the public sector.

Independent colleges and universities are particularly effective in seeing higher-ability students through to a timely completion of the bachelor's degree. Only one of seven students at the lowest ability level completed a degree, and more than seven of ten dropped out, regardless of institutional sector.

Although the independent sector graduates somewhat more high-ability students, it also does as well as the public sector with all ability levels. Therefore, the better overall completion rate at the independent colleges and universities cannot be attributed solely to the completion rates of high-ability students.

Independent colleges and universities graduate a higher proportion of students, in a more timely manner, than public institutions. While both socioeconomic status and academic ability influence completion rates, neither can entirely account for the difference between the sectors. Independent colleges and universities have higher completion rates among high-socioeconomic-status and high-ability students, but not at the expense of lower completion rates than public institutions for students of lower socioeconomic status and ability.

Table 3 **Persistence by Test Score Quartile and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students**

Persistence Status	Test Score: Low Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	High Quartile
Completers				
Independent	20.5%*	37.4%	48.3%	63.3%
Public	16.7%	32.3%	38.9%	54.9%
Persisters and Stopouts				
Independent	4.6%*	1.9%*	13.1%*	7.1%*
Public	19.7%	13.7%	14.7%	13.5%
Dropouts				
Independent	74.9%	60.6%	38.4%	29.6%
Public	63.5%	54.1%	46.4%	31.6%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Are There Differences in Persistence for Minority Students?

Traditional ethnic minority groups are growing dramatically, and in some areas of the country will soon become the majority. If colleges and universities are to serve these new students well, they must understand their current persistence behavior.

Before discussing persistence, a few comments on college entry are necessary to provide a context. White students are more likely to enroll in independent colleges and universities, while minorities are more likely to enroll in the public sector. This is especially true for Asian Americans, with seven of eight enrolled in public institutions. However, this finding is undoubtedly influenced by the concentration of Asian American students in the West (70 percent), where well-developed and prestigious public systems exist.

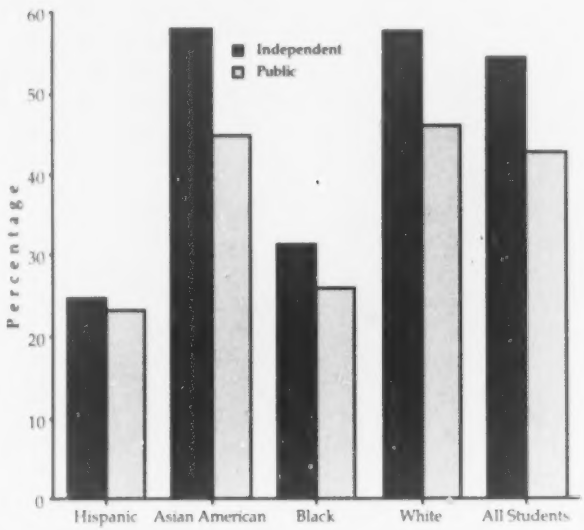
White and Asian American students are more likely to start on the traditional entry-path than minority students, but this is not always the case. (See Appendix Table 2A.) While only six of ten Hispanic students in the independent sector began on the traditional path, more black students in the independent sector began on the traditional path than they did in the public sector.

Differences in persistence appear immediately when ethnicity is considered. (See Figure 3.) Black and Hispanic students have completion rates that hover around 20 to 25 percent, while the degree completion rates for whites and Asian Americans are more than 40 percent. These differences remain when the analysis is limited to the traditional-path students. Not surprisingly, the dropout rates for blacks and Hispanics (63 percent and 54 percent) are much higher than those of whites and Asian Americans (42 percent and 37 percent). Those differences are exaggerated among traditional-path students.

If there is a bright spot, it is among the Hispanic students. One of four Hispanics was still enrolled after six years, which brings their persistence rate up to 47 percent. One in five Asian Americans was still enrolled at the six-year mark, resulting in a very high persistence rate—63 percent. Unfortunately, this is not the case for black students. The completers, persisters, and stopouts account for only 37 percent of the group.

Students of all ethnic groups in independent colleges and universities completed their degrees in a more timely manner than those at public institutions. Among traditional-path students, there is a small but clear difference of 5.5 percent for blacks, and the rate is more than 10 percent higher for whites and Asian Americans. While the difference for Hispanics is only about 2 percent, and thus not statistically significant, it shows that the independent sector does no worse than the public sector for this group. The dropout rates are much higher for Hispanics and blacks in the independent sector, but higher in the public sector for whites. Clearly the 11.5 percent advantage in overall degree completion at independent colleges and universities is driven by the performance of white and Asian American students.

Figure 3 **Six-Year Completion Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students (1980-86)**



While the percentages vary by ethnic group, the pattern of persistence for all the groups is similar to the overall pattern for all students. (See Figures 3 and 4.) The major dropout point is the first year, and completion does not appear in any appreciable percentage until the ninth semester. An exception is the persistence rate for Hispanic students, which shows a larger decrease for persisters between the fourth and fifth semesters.

Differences between independent colleges and universities and public institutions are also evident here. As with all students, completion in a timely manner is more likely for minority students in the independent sector. However, for both Hispanics and blacks, the difference is not maintained over the final two years. The gap between the two sectors apparent in the ninth semester is virtually nonexistent in the twelfth semester. The general finding for higher persistence (but not completion) rates in the public sector is also seen among minority students.

Figure 4 **Semester-by-Semester Completion Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students (1980-86)**

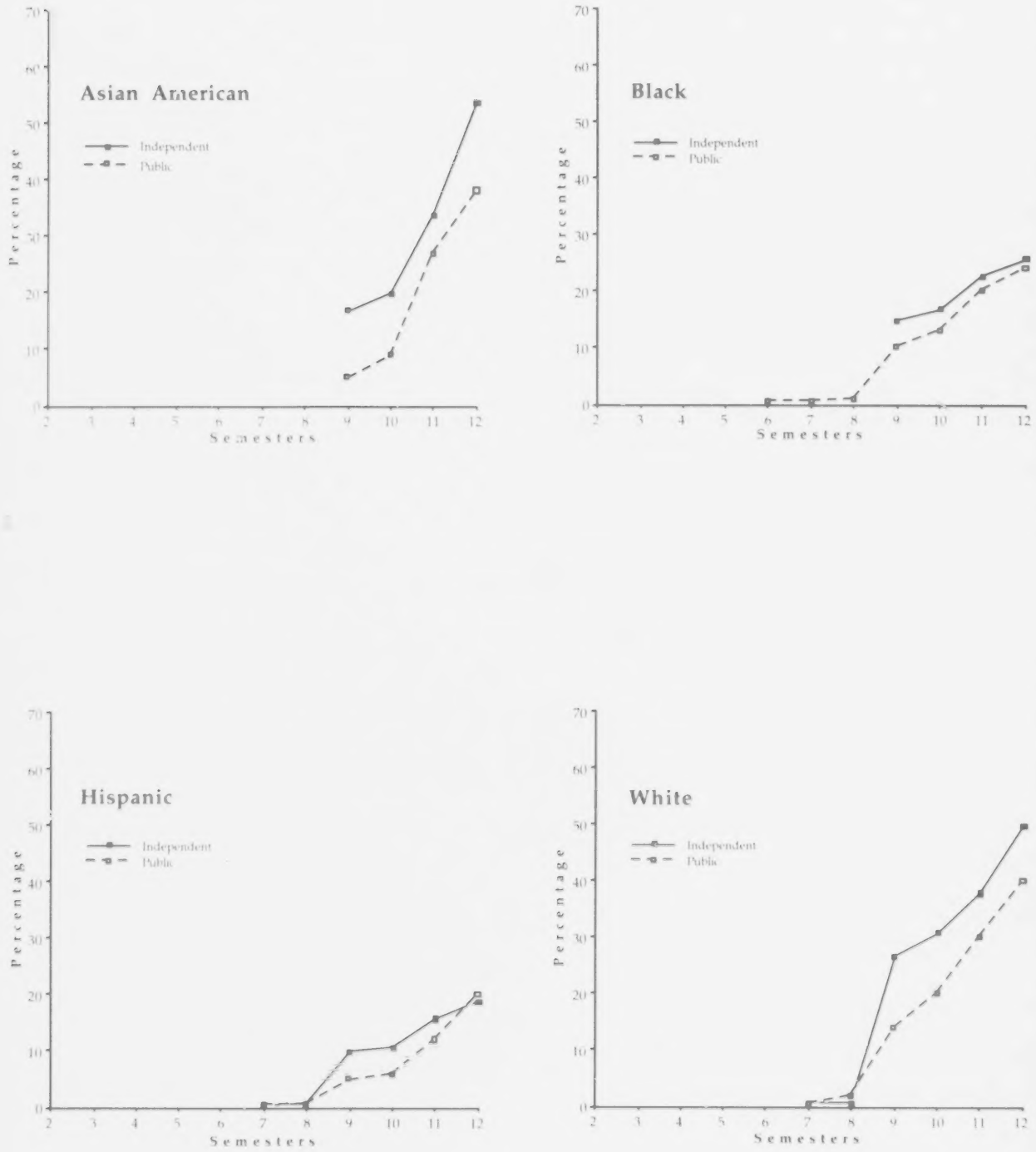
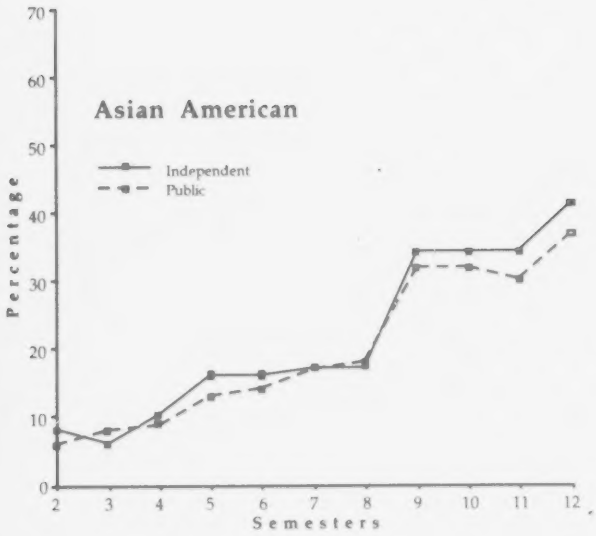
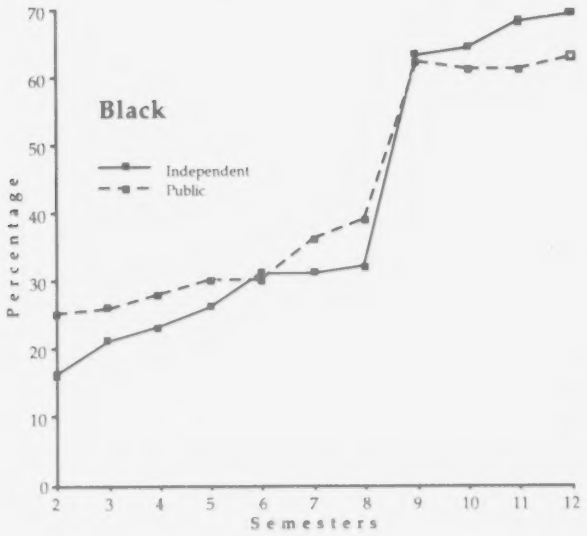
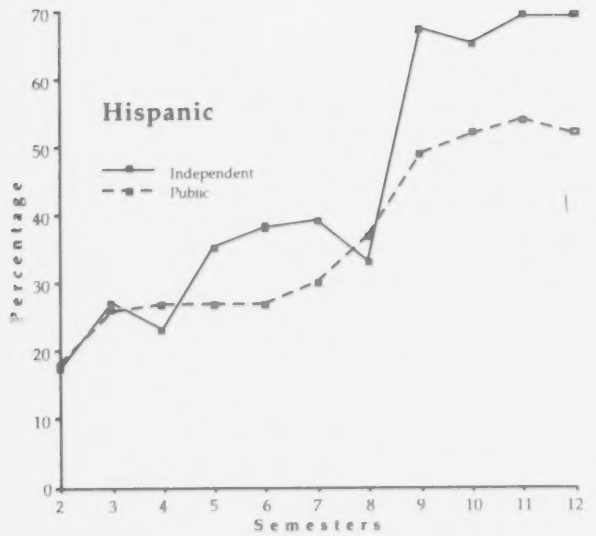
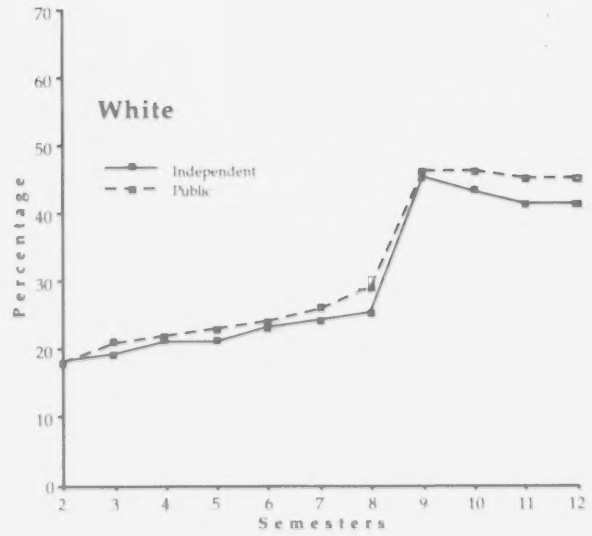


Figure 5 **Semester-by-Semester Dropout Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students (1980-86)**









The Effect of Socioeconomic Status and Ethnicity on Persistence

The effects of socioeconomic status and ability in each ethnic group are similar to the overall findings. (See Tables 4 and 5.) However, it should be noted that two of three black and Hispanic students are found in the lower half of the socioeconomic-status range, and they are also overrepresented in the lower half of the ability test score range.

Oddly, there appears to be no relationship between socioeconomic status and completion for Hispanic students; the percentage of completers in this ethnic group remains relatively stable, regardless of socioeconomic-status quartile. This might be a result of the concentration of Hispanic students in the lower quartiles; yet the finding is not duplicated for black students, who are also more likely to come from low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds.

The percentage of black and white completers is higher in the independent sector with one exception —low-socioeconomic-status whites. There is no clear pattern for Hispanic students because there is no clear relationship between socioeconomic status and completion for that group.

The Effect of Ability and Ethnicity on Persistence

As academic ability increases among white students, the degree completion rate increases as well. That rate is higher for students at independent colleges and universities in each ability quartile. The picture is much less clear for Hispanic and black students.

Black students seem to exhibit the expected relationship between ability and completion except in the high-ability group. In both sectors, their completion rate is lower (30 percent in the independent sector and 24 percent in the public sector) than the rate for any other black students except the lowest ability group. (See Table 5.) The loss of this segment of the most academically talented black students has dire implications for colleges and universities, for the black community, and for the nation.

The cause of this behavior is not immediately apparent from the data. In the follow-up survey, however, those who dropped out reported "keeping house" and "looking for a job" as their two most common activities after leaving college.

There is no appreciable difference in the completion

Table 4 **Persistence Status by Socioeconomic Status (SES), Ethnicity, and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students**

	Completers		Persisters/Stopouts		Dropouts	
	Independent	Public	Independent	Public	Independent	Public
Ethnicity						
Hispanic						
Low SES	23%*	23%	22%*	20%	55%	58%
2nd quartile	30%*	31%	10%*	25%*	60%*	43%
3rd quartile	26%*	34%	14%*	19%*	60%*	47%
High SES	27%*	21%*	2%*	30%*	71%*	49%
Black						
Low SES	32%	24%	3%*	17%	65%	58%
2nd quartile	26%*	20%	2%*	18%*	72%	62%
3rd quartile	37%*	31%	6%*	18%*	57%*	51%
High SES	56%*	39%	5%*	4%*	39%*	57%
White						
Low SES	25%	36%	22%*	12%	53%	52%
2nd quartile	47%	32%	8%*	15%	46%	53%
3rd quartile	56%	48%	7%*	12%	36%	40%
High SES	66%	52%	5%*	14%	29%	34%

Notes: The sample size of Asian Americans in the independent sector is too small to allow for meaningful analysis; therefore, Asian Americans are not included in the table.

An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

rates for low-ability Hispanic students by institutional sector. Only one in seven completed, but the very small number of students in this group at independent institutions makes any generalization difficult. The pattern in the public sector conforms to the general pattern, with increasing completion rates as ability level rises. In the independent sector, there is more fluctuation, with a 70 percent completion rate for high-ability students (although their unweighted number is very small). However, only in this high-ability group does the Hispanic dropout rate dip below 70 percent in the independent sector.

When persistence is viewed through the prism of ethnicity, the variety of experiences among college students appears. Black and Hispanic students' completion rates are substantially lower than those of white and Asian American students, and their dropout rates are higher, especially in the independent sector. Neither public nor independent institutions have a very good completion rate for low-socioeconomic-status and low-ability minority students. On the other hand, independent colleges and universities have higher completion rates for students in the upper half of the socioeconomic status and ability ranges. This is true for high-ability blacks, too, but in both sectors the completion rates for this group are inexplicably low.

Do High-Ability Students from Low-Socioeconomic-Status Backgrounds Have a Unique Persistence Profile?

We have seen the ways that socioeconomic status and academic ability separately influence persistence. Do they have an even larger combined influence? It is clear that the two factors are related, since 46 percent of the high-ability-quartile students are also in the high-socioeconomic-status quartile; while one-third of the low-ability-quartile students are also low-socioeconomic-status students.

The importance of this relationship to persistence can be highlighted by comparing two extreme groups—students who are in the low quartile on both ability and socioeconomic status and those in the high quartile on both factors. Among traditional-entry-path students, only 13 percent of the "low/low" group completed, compared with 61 percent of the "high/high" group. In contrast, almost 30 percent of the low-socioeconomic-status students and approximately 18 percent of the low-ability students completed degrees. Among high-socioeconomic-status students, completion is nearly 54 percent and exceeds 56 percent for high-ability students. Thus, students with both factors at the low end of the scale did considerably worse than students at the low end of either scale taken alone.

Table 5 **Persistence Status by Test Score, Ethnicity, and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students**

	Completers		Persisters/Stopouts		Dropouts	
	Independent	Public	Independent	Public	Independent	Public
Ethnicity						
Hispanic						
Low score	2%*	11%*	20%*	15%*	79%	73%
2nd quartile	25%*	23%*	5%*	24%*	70%*	53%
3rd quartile	17%*	29%	3%*	32%	80%*	40%
High score	70%*	40%*	6%*	27%*	26%*	32%
Black						
Low score	18%*	17%	4%*	15%	78%	68%
2nd quartile	37%*	27%	6%*	22%	57%	51%
3rd quartile	55%*	30%	5%*	12%*	40%*	58%
High score	30%*	24%*	1%*	20%*	69%*	57%
White						
Low score	26%*	18%*	2%*	24%*	72%*	57%
2nd quartile	39%*	35%	1%*	11%*	61%	55%
3rd quartile	53%	40%	13%*	14%	34%	46%
High score	64%	56%	8%*	13%	28%	31%

Notes: The sample size of Asian Americans in the independent sector is too small to allow for meaningful analysis; therefore, Asian Americans are not included in the table.

An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

The dropout rates tell a similar story. The dropout rate for "low/low" students is 70 percent, but only 25 percent for "high/high" students. Among low-socioeconomic-status students, the dropout rate is about 58 percent; for high-socioeconomic-status students, it is 34 percent. Nearly 66 percent of the low-ability students dropped out, but only 31 percent of the high-ability students did.

With this suspicion confirmed, we can look at a group of students who are likely to become even more important to colleges and universities in the future—high-ability students from low-socioeconomic-status backgrounds (HA/LSES). In our sample, 8.8 percent of the students fit this description. They enrolled in public and independent institutions in percentages comparable to the entire sample. Overall they entered higher education on the traditional path in percentages similar to the entire sample. However, only 70 percent of the Hispanic students entered on the traditional path, while more than 80 percent of the black and white students in the independent sector were traditional-path entrants. HA/LSES students were also more likely to be black or Hispanic. (See Appendix Table 17A.)

Because the sample of HA/LSES students is so small (and its subgroups even smaller), any attempt to generalize from these data on HA/LSES students to the larger population must be made cautiously.

The six-year completion rates of these students are approximately the same as that for all traditional-path students (44 percent versus 46 percent), as is their dropout rate (42 percent for each group). (See Table 6.) There is a somewhat higher completion rate for independent college and university students (by 6.2

Table 6 **Persistence of High-Ability/Low-Socioeconomic-Status Students by Entry Path and Institutional Control**

Persistence Status	Independent	Public	All Students
Completers			
All Students	44.9%*	35.4%	37.5%
Traditional Entry	48.6%*	42.4%*	43.8%
Persisters and Stopouts			
All Students	12.0%*	16.0%	15.1%
Traditional Entry	13.4%*	14.8%*	14.5% *
Dropouts			
All Students	43.7%	48.7%	47.5%
Traditional Entry	38.1%*	42.8%*	41.8% *

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 7 **Persistence Status of High-Ability/Low-Socioeconomic-Status Students by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

	Completers		Persisters/Stopouts		Dropouts	
	Independent	Public	Independent	Public	Independent	Public
Ethnicity						
Hispanic	50%*	30%	7%*	20%	43%*	50%
Black	40%*	32%	**	21%	60%	47%
White	49%	48%	18%*	13%	33%	40%
All Students	49%	42%	14%*	15%	38%	43%

Notes: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

The double asterisk (**) indicates that the cell is empty; no black HA/LSES students in this sample are persisters or stopouts. It should not be assumed that these behaviors are never present in the general population of black college students.

percent), but the sector difference is not as large as it is for all traditional-path students (11.5 percent). Although there is a slightly lower dropout rate in the public sector (4.7 percent), it is even smaller than the difference in the completion rate.

There are some differences in persistence for ethnic groups among the HA/LSES students. (See Table 7.) The completion rates for HA/LSES blacks and Hispanics are higher in the independent sector. However, while Hispanic dropout rates are lower in the independent colleges and universities, black HA/LSES students are less likely to leave in the public sector. Completion for white students does not vary by sector, although they are slightly more likely to drop out in the public institutions.

Overall, HA/LSES students in independent colleges and universities are more likely either to complete or drop out, not persist or stop out. Completion rates for HA/LSES Hispanics and blacks are higher than for all Hispanic and black students in the study's sample, and this is especially true for those students in the independent sector.

The completion rates of HA/LSES students indicate that high ability can overcome a major part of the influence of low socioeconomic status. However, HA/LSES students do not complete at rates comparable to all high-ability students. Low socioeconomic status has a detrimental effect on this group of students that their ability cannot entirely remove.

Do Grants Influence Persistence in the First Year?

Grants are the most commonly received type of financial aid. They are intended to diminish the effect of family financial condition on access to college and the student's ability to remain enrolled. The largest single point of loss to the higher education system is the freshman year. Therefore, it is worthwhile to look at the relationship of grants to persistence in the freshman year.

Independent college and university students receive all sources of aid in larger percentages than do their public institution peers, but they receive a much higher percentage of institutional grants and College Work-Study. (See Appendix Table 18A.)

There are also different patterns of aid by ethnic group. (See Table 8.) Regardless of sector, black students are most likely to receive a grant, and more likely than other students to receive a loan or College Work-Study. However, they are least likely to receive family support in the independent sector. Loans and family support play a prominent role for Hispanics. For both Asian Americans and whites, family support and grants play the most important roles, with family support leading the way in the public sector. White students are more likely to receive an institutional grant; this is most evident in the independent sector, with half of the white students receiving support from this source.

Table 8 **Percentage of Traditional-Entry-Path Students Receiving First-Year Financial Aid Support by Type of Support, Ethnicity, and Institutional Control**

Ethnicity	Grant	Institutional Grant	Loan	Work-Study	Family
Hispanic					
Independent	51.1%	25.8%	25.5%	24.3%*	37.9%
Public	56.6%	19.1%	17.0%	14.7%	34.0%
Asian American					
Independent	49.6%*	38.2%*	34.9%*	21.0%*	47.6%*
Public	42.1%	13.8%*	16.9%	3.2%*	56.3%
Black					
Independent	68.9%	32.8%	43.4%	31.0%	33.9%
Public	66.4%	13.2%	24.5%	25.3%	32.8%
White					
Independent	49.9%	50.5%	45.1%	19.8%	49.7%
Public	36.9%	19.6%	27.5%	9.6%	53.5%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

This makes grants the most important single resource to discuss in relation to first-year persistence. In fact, there is a dramatic difference in persistence between students receiving grants and those who have not received them.

Nine of every ten students who received a grant in the first year were still enrolled in the second semester. (See Table 9.) This finding applies to all ethnic groups and students in both independent and public colleges and universities. Students who did not receive grants, however, had an overall persistence rate of only 75 percent in the second semester. The situation for black students is worse: only 60 percent were still enrolled in the second semester. In the independent sector almost two-thirds of the students were still enrolled, but only 58 percent of the black students without a grant at public institutions were still enrolled in the second semester.

These findings cannot establish a causal relationship between receiving a grant and continuing enrollment, but the situation described suggests that such a link should be investigated further. The results for black students demand more consideration. Clearly some of these students return to college later, but some measures could be taken, possibly through the use of institutional grants, to make more resources available to them.

Table 9 **Persistence Status as of February 1981 for Students Entering in Fall 1980 by Grant Status, Ethnicity, and Institutional Control**

	Grant			No Grant		
Ethnicity	**Persisters**	**Stopouts**	**Dropouts**	**Persisters**	**Stopouts**	**Dropouts**
Hispanic						
Independent	93.2%	3.4%	3.3%	72.2%	5.6%	22.2%
Public	92.4%	2.5%	5.1%	74.6%	6.8%	18.6%
Asian American						
Independent	100%	0%	0%	68.3%	21.6%	10.0%
Public	100%	0%	0%	91.1%	2.1%	6.8%
Black						
Independent	92.7%	3.5%	3.9%	65.6%	9.1%	25.4%
Public	89.4%	3.5%	7.1%	57.5%	8.2%	34.4%
White						
Independent	93.0%	1.9%	5.1%	76.5%	4.3%	19.2%
Public	91.3%	1.8%	6.9%	79.5%	4.5%	16.0%

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS

For students who went to college full-time at a four-year institution directly after high school, the completion rate six years later is less than 50 percent. However, almost six of ten have completed or are still enrolled, which gives one hope that over a longer period of time their completion rates will rise to the level of 50 to 60 percent found in prior persistence studies.

The simple completion or dropout rate does not tell the whole story. Students in independent colleges and universities have a higher completion rate than those in public institutions, and they are more likely to complete their degrees on time (in four years). On the other hand, there is not much difference between the two sectors in dropout rates. This is attributable to the extended time for degree completion in the public sector: more students remain enrolled without completing their degrees.

There are substantial differences between black and Hispanic students and their white and Asian American peers. The completion rate for blacks and Hispanics is less then 30 percent after six years, about half the rate for the other two groups. The independent colleges and universities have a higher completion rate for every ethnic group, but the difference is less than 2 percent for Hispanics and 5.5 percent among blacks. The major differences occur among Asian Americans and whites, which indicates that the overall advantage to the independent sector in completion is driven by the performance of these students.

As socioeconomic status and academic ability increase, completion also increases. There are, however, exceptions for both factors. Socioeconomic status apparently has very little influence on the persistence of Hispanics; their completion rates remain relatively stable regardless of status level or institutional sector. The second anomaly is also disturbing. High-ability black students are less likely to complete and more likely to drop out than any other black students except those in the lowest ability group. Again, this is true for students in both independent and public colleges and universities (although the completion rate is higher in the independent sector).

Taken together, socioeconomic status and ability have a cumulative effect that is greater than the effect of either variable alone. This works to the advantage of high-ability/low-socioeconomic-status (HA/LSES) minority students. Their completion rates are substantially higher than completion rates for all minority students. There is no appreciable difference for white students. Unfortunately, high ability does not completely overcome socioeconomic background; the completion rate for high-ability students in general is still higher than that of HA/LSES students.

The final piece of information garnered about persistence is the possibility of a relationship to receiving a grant. More students left college in the first year than at any other single point in the six-year period of the study. However, the dropout rate is substantially lower among students who received a grant during their first year. Only one of ten grant recipients left, while the rate for students without grants is one in four. In fact, only 65.6 percent of black students in the independent sector continued to the second semester without leaving, and that rate drops to 58 percent for the public institutions.

A variety of other factors that could influence persistence behavior were simply beyond the limits of the *High School and Beyond* data base. In particular, research on the role of student involvement in campus life, academic and social integration, and the quality of student effort could add to our understanding of persistence. The purpose of this study, however, has been descriptive, and it provides a valuable perspective on persistence in independent and public institutions.

Independent colleges and universities are players in the persistence and completion game for all students. Despite higher dropout rates at independent campuses, the sector still produces higher completion rates in a more timely manner than the public sector. Although completion rates for minority students are not good in either sector, the record of the independent colleges and universities is comparable to or better than that of the public sector. Indeed, there are "pockets of success" that stand out—high-ability/low-socioeconomic-status students, high-ability students, middle- and high-socioeconomic-status students.

There is still a long way to go before freshmen, and minority students in particular, graduate at rates equivalent to their initial enrollment rates, or approaching their aspiration levels. Increased retention requires increased institutional self-examination, not simply the imposition of new standards for access and performance on students. It is a task that must be undertaken by all of higher education.

APPENDIX

Table 1A **The Origin of the Sample of 1980 High School Seniors Drawn from *High School and Beyond***

Data Source	Unweighted N	Weighted N
Base Year Survey (1980)	28,240	3,039,720
Third Follow-Up Survey (1986)	10,583	3,039,720
Attended a Four-Year Institution (1980-86)	5,424	1,385,661
Traditional Entry	3,957	1,019,033
Nontraditional Entry	1,467	366,628

Note: The "unweighted N" indicates the actual number of students in the sample who fall into the category. The "weighted N" is a statistical adjustment to the unweighted N that provides an indication of how many students would be in the category if the entire population, not just a sample, had been used.

Table 2A **College-Entry-Path Group by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

Ethnicity	Independent Institutions Only	Public Institutions Only	All Institutions
Hispanic			
Traditional	59.9%	68.0%	66.7%
Nontraditional	40.1%	32.0%	33.3%
Asian American			
Traditional	74.6%	74.9%	77.8%
Nontraditional	23.6%	25.1%	22.2%
Black			
Traditional	73.1%	66.1%	68.6%
Nontraditional	26.9%	33.9%	31.4%
White			
Traditional	73.1%	74.6%	73.9%
Nontraditional	26.9%	25.4%	26.1%
All Students			
Traditional	73.8%	73.3%	73.5%
Nontraditional	26.2%	26.7%	26.5%

Notes: "Traditional" students are those who began in fall 1980 full-time at a four-year institution. "Nontraditional" students delayed entry, began part-time, or did not enter a four-year institution first.

"All Institutions" includes students who transferred between institutional control groups.

Table 3A **Ethnic Distribution of College Attenders in the Data Base**

Ethnicity	Unweighted N	Weighted N
Hispanic	897	58,291
Native American	72	8,130
Asian American	265	31,250
Black	1,308	149,060
White	2,859	1,128,861
TOTAL	5,403	1,375,592

Note: There were 21 nonrespondents.

Table 4A **Distribution of Hispanic Subgroups among College Attenders**

Ethnicity	Unweighted N	Weighted N
Mexican	463	31,105
Cuban	136	6,030
Puerto Rican	85	5,698
Other	213	15,458
TOTAL	897	58,291

Table 5A **Four-Year College Enrollment Percentages by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

Ethnicity	Independent Only	Public Only	Attended Both
Hispanic	20.5%	69.6%	9.9%
Asian American	12.6%	71.0%	16.4%
Black	21.0%	68.6%	10.4%
White	25.4%	61.5%	13.1%
All Students	24.4%	62.9%	12.7%

Note: Native Americans are not included in this or any of the remaining tables in the study because their numbers in the sample are too limited to support analysis.

Table 6A **Persistence after Six Years for Traditional-Entry-Path Students by Institutional Control**

Persistence Category	Percentage
Completers	
Independent	54.2%
Public	43.7%
Persisters	
Independent	2.5%
Public	6.2%
Stopouts	
Independent	4.6%
Public	7.4%
Dropouts	
Independent	38.7%
Public	43.7%

Table 7A **Semester-By-Semester Persistence Rates for All Students**

Semesters	Completers	Persisters	Stopouts	Dropouts
First (Fall 1980)		83.2%	16.8%	
Second		78.3%	3.5%	18.2%
Third		71.1%	9.2%	19.7%
Fourth		68.3%	10.1%	21.6%
Fifth		61.6%	16.0%	22.4%
Sixth	.1%	60.0%	16.8%	23.1%
Seventh	.5%	56.0%	18.0%	25.5%
Eighth	1.1%	53.5%	18.1%	27.3%
Ninth	15.5%	25.7%	12.6%	46.2%
Tenth	19.9%	20.5%	14.0%	45.5%
Eleventh	29.3%	11.2%	15.1%	44.4%
Twelfth (Spring 1986)	40.7%	4.5%	10.4%	44.3%

Table 8A **Semester-by-Semester Persistence Rates by Institutional Control for All Students**

Semesters	Completers	Persisters	Stopouts	Dropouts
First (Fall 1980)				
Independent		81.9%	18.1%	
Public		83.1%	16.9%	
Second				
Independent		79.2%	3.1%	17.7%
Public		77.9%	3.6%	18.5%
Third				
Independent		70.1%	10.3%	19.7%
Public		70.6%	8.3%	21.2%
Fourth				
Independent		68.2%	10.6%	21.2%
Public		67.8%	9.6%	22.7%
Fifth				
Independent		62.2%	15.5%	22.3%
Public		60.6%	15.5%	23.9%
Sixth				
Independent		60.3%	15.4%	24.3%
Public	.1%*	58.9%	16.7%	24.3%
Seventh				
Independent	.7%*	56.7%	17.2%	25.5%
Public	.6%*	54.9%	17.0%	27.5%
Eighth				
Independent	.9%*	55.6%	17.2%	26.3%
Public	1.4%	51.8%	16.9%	29.9%
Ninth				
Independent	25.6%	17.3%	10.2%	47.0%
Public	13.2%	26.9%	11.8%	48.0%
Tenth				
Independent	28.8%	14.5%	10.8%	46.1%
Public	18.2%	21.3%	13.1%	47.4%
Eleventh				
Independent	36.2%	7.9%	11.2%	44.7%
Public	27.6%	11.3%	13.9%	47.3%
Twelfth (Spring 1986)				
Independent	46.3%	2.4%	6.5%	44.9%
Public	36.8%	5.1%	10.7%	47.4%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 9A **Distribution of Socioeconomic Status, High School Grades, and Academic Ability Test Scores by Quartile for All Students**

	Socioeconomic Status			
	Low Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	High Quartile
Socioeconomic Status	15.0%	19.7%	26.2%	39.2%
High School Grades	.2%*	7.8%	42.2%	49.7%
Academic Ability Test Score	10.3%	18.7%	29.0%	41.9%

Note: High school grades are divided into A or A/B, B or B/C, C or C/D, and below D.
An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 10A **Persistence by Socioeconomic Status and Institutional Control for All Students**

	Socioeconomic Status			
Persistence Status	Low Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	High Quartile
Completers				
Independent	21.2%	34.4%	45.5%	59.2%
Public	23.7%	25.6%	40.8%	50.8%
Persisters and Stopouts				
Independent	11.9%	10.3% *	8.5%*	7.4%
Public	12.6%	19.9%	13.8%	16.1%
Dropouts				
Independent	66.9%	55.4%	46.1%	33.4%
Public	63.8%	54.5%	45.5%	36.3%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 11A **Semester-by-Semester Persistence Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

	Hispanic			
Semesters	**Completers**	**Persisters**	**Stopouts**	**Dropouts**
First (Fall 1980)				
Independent		81%	19%	
Public		82%	18%	
Second				
Independent		79%	4%	17%
Public		78%	5%	18%
Third				
Independent		61%	13%	27%
Public		67%	7%	26%
Fourth				
Independent		57%	20%	23%
Public		64%	8%	27%
Fifth				
Independent		43%	22%	35%
Public		58%	15%	27%
Sixth				
Independent		40%	22%	38%
Public		57%	16%	27%
Seventh				
Independent	.6%*	37%	23%	39%
Public	.7%*	53%	16%	30%
Eighth				
Independent	.8%*	36%	30%	33%
Public	.7%*	47%	15%	37%
Ninth				
Independent	10%	12%	11%	67%
Public	5%	33%	13%	49%
Tenth				
Independent	11%	11%	13%	65%
Public	6%	27%	15%	52%
Eleventh				
Independent	16%	4%*	11%*	69%
Public	12%	17%	17%	54%
Twelfth (Spring 1986)				
Independent	19%	2%*	10%*	69%
Public	20%	11%	17%	52%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 11A (cont.) **Semester-by-Semester Persistence Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

	Asian American			
Semesters	**Completers**	**Persisters**	**Stopouts**	**Dropouts**
First (Fall 1980)				
Independent		87%	13%*	
Public		94%	6%*	
Second				
Independent		82%	10%*	8%*
Public		92%	2%*	6%*
Third				
Independent		82%	12%*	6%*
Public		89%	3%*	8%*
Fourth				
Independent		82%	9%*	10%*
Public		88%	3%*	9%*
Fifth				
Independent		80%	3%*	16%*
Public		78%	9%*	13%*
Sixth				
Independent		80%	3%*	16%*
Public		77%	9%*	14%*
Seventh				
Independent		79%	4%*	17%*
Public		71%	12%*	17%
Eighth				
Independent		76%	7%*	17%*
Public		71%	11%*	18%
Ninth				
Independent	17%*	46%*	3%*	34%*
Public	5%*	51%	11%*	32%
Tenth				
Independent	20%*	43%*	3%*	34%*
Public	9%*	46%	13%*	32%
Eleventh				
Independent	34%*	21%*	11%*	34%*
Public	27%	25%	18%	30%
Twelfth (Spring 1986)				
Independent	54%*	4%*	2%*	41%*
Public	38%	15%*	10%*	37%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted **N** below 25.

Table 11A (Cont.) **Semester-by-Semester Persistence Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

	Black			
Semesters	**Completers**	**Persisters**	**Stopouts**	**Dropouts**
First (Fall 1980)				
Independent		82%	18%	
Public		76%	24%	
Second				
Independent		79%	5%*	16%
Public		69%	6%	25%
Third				
Independent		69%	10%	21%
Public		62%	12%	26%
Fourth				
Independent		66%	10%	23%
Public		59%	13%	28%
Fifth				
Independent		59%	15%	26%
Public		50%	19%	30%
Sixth				
Independent		55%	14%	31%
Public	.4%*	49%	20%	30%
Seventh				
Independent		51%	18%	31%
Public	.5%*	45%	18%	36%
Eighth				
Independent		51%	17%	32%
Public	1%*	42%	18%	39%
Ninth				
Independent	15%	15%	8%*	63%
Public	10%	18%	10%	62%
Tenth				
Independent	17%	10%	9%	64%
Public	13%	15%	10%	61%
Eleventh				
Independent	23%	2%*	7%*	68%
Public	20%	8%	11%	61%
Twelfth (Spring 1986)				
Independent	26%	.5%*	5%*	69%
Public	24%	4%	9%	63%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 11A (Cont.) **Semester-by-Semester Persistence Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

	White			
Semesters	**Completers**	**Persisters**	**Stopouts**	**Dropouts**
First (Fall 1980)				
Independent		82%	18%	
Public		84%	16%	
Second				
Independent		79%	3%	18%
Public		79%	3%	18%
Third				
Independent		71%	10%	19%
Public		71%	8%	21%
Fourth				
Independent		69%	10%	21%
Public		69%	9%	22%
Fifth				
Independent		63%	15%	21%
Public		62%	15%	23%
Sixth				
Independent		62%	15%	23%
Public		60%	16%	24%
Seventh				
Independent	.8%*	58%	17%	24%
Public	.6%*	56%	17%	26%
Eighth				
Independent	1%*	57%	17%	25%
Public	2%*	53%	17%	29%
Ninth				
Independent	27%	17%	11%	45%
Public	14%	27%	12%	46%
Tenth				
Independent	31%	15%	11%	43%
Public	20%	21%	13%	46%
Eleventh				
Independent	38%	9%	12%	41%
Public	30%	11%	14%	45%
Twelfth (Spring 1986)				
Independent	50%	3%*	7%	41%
Public	40%	5%	11%	45%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 12A **Persistence by Test-Score Quartile and Institutional Control for All Students**

Persistence Status	Test Score: Low Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	High Quartile
Completers				
Independent	14.3%*	29.0%	41.0%	57.0%
Public	14.3%	29.6%	34.4%	51.5%
Persisters and Stopouts				
Independent	6.1%*	4.1%*	14.4%	9.8%
Public	16.9%	16.4%	15.5%	16.0%
Dropouts				
Independent	79.5%	66.9%	44.6%	33.3%
Public	68.9%	54.0%	50.1%	32.5%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted N below 25.

Table 13A **Six-Year Persistence Rates by Ethnicity for All Students**

Ethnicity	Completers	Persisters	Stopouts	Dropouts
Hispanic	20.4%	9.3%	15.9%	54.4%
Asian American	41.5%	12.8%	8.5%	37.2%
Black	23.9%	3.2%	9.6%	63.3%
White	43.9%	4.2%	10.4%	41.5%
All Students	40.6%	4.5%	10.5%	44.5%

Table 14A **Six-Year Persistence Rates by Ethnicity and Institutional Control for Traditional-Entry-Path Students**

Persistence Status	Hispanic	Asian American	Black	White	All Students
Completers					
Independent	24.9%	58.0%	31.4%	57.6%	54.2%
Public	23.3%	44.7%	25.9%	46.0%	42.7%
Persisters					
Independent	1.6%	5.0%	0.2%	2.8%	2.5%
Public	14.1%	11.0%	5.5%	5.7%	6.2%
Stopouts					
Independent	11.6%	2.0%	3.1%	4.5%	4.6%
Public	13.6%	8.8%	8.6%	6.9%	7.4%
Dropouts					
Independent	61.8%	35.0%	65.4%	35.1%	38.7%
Public	49.0%	35.4%	59.9%	41.4%	43.7%

Table 15A **Socioeconomic Status by Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Low Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	High Quartile
Hispanic	42.8%	20.5%	18.1%	18.6%
Asian American	22.6%	18.1%	27.2%	32.1%
Black	43.2%	24.1%	17.8%	14.9%
White	9.7%	19.1%	27.7%	43.5%

Table 16A **Socioeconomic Status by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

Ethnicity	Low Quartile	Second Quartile	Third Quartile	High Quartile
Hispanic				
Independent	43.4%	24.3%	17.2%	15.1%
Public	44.0%	18.9%	17.9%	19.3%
Asian American				
Independent	26.1%*	20.7%*	8.1%*	45.2%*
Public	22.0%	17.7%	30.6%	29.8%
Black				
Independent	39.9%	28.4%	17.3%	14.4%
Public	46.1%	21.9%	18.2%	13.9%
White				
Independent	10.3%	17.6%	25.8%	46.2%
Public	10.3%	19.9%	29.7%	40.1%

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates an unweighted **N** below 25.

Table 17A **Percentage of High-Ability/Low-Socioeconomic-Status Students Entering on the Traditional Path by Ethnicity and Institutional Control**

Ethnicity	Percentage
Hispanic	
Independent	64.2%
Public	70.0%
All	69.2%
Black	
Independent	88.5%
Public	71.8%
All	74.8%
White	
Independent	80.5%
Public	77.8%
All	78.4%

Note: The sample size of Asian Americans in the independent sector is too small to allow for meaningful analysis; therefore, Asian Americans are not included in the table.

Table 18A **Percentage of Students Receiving Financial Aid in Fall 1980 by Institutional Control and Type of Aid**

	— Institutional Control —	
Aid Type	**Independent**	**Public**
Grant / Scholarship	59.5%	46.5%
Institutional Grant	48.2%	18.5%
Loan	49.8%	30.0%
College Work-Study	22.0%	11.2%
Family Support	52.5%	48.6%

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• ERRATA •

The six-year baccalaureate degree completion rate for traditional-path students in public colleges and universities is 42.7 percent, not 43.7 percent. This error appears on pages iv, 4, and 19.